THE CASE OF THE WHISPERING GALLERY

By FREDERICK WIEHL

1944 is a presidential election year in America. Although the election itself does not take place until November, the campaign for it is beginning to make itself felt in the speeches and actions of American politicians and in the news arriving from the USA. Soon the conventions of the two great American parties will meet to choose their candidates.

Frederick Wiehl is an American labor leader who happens to be in Shanghai as a consequence of the war. He participated in the party conventions of 1940—the last ones before 1944—taking an active part in the Republican Convention and as a spectator at the Democratic one. This enables him to describe the actual process of selecting the candidates and tell us about some of the things that happen behind the scenes.—K.M.

WE MET IN A SWIMMING POOL

I met Thomas E. Dewey for the first time long before he became New York City's famous District Attorney. It was in the swimming pool of the Crystal Club in the sub-basement of the Woolworth Building. On a hot summer day in New York City, after trying a case in one of the city courts and losing it because the judge had been "fixed" by some politician, I always knew of one good way to cool off: that was to go for a swim in the basement of the building in which my law offices were located and listen to Dewey explain just how he was going to clean up the courts some day. I never believed him, but his opinions often consoled me, and I was glad to hear at least one man talk about judicial reform.

When the campaign for Dewey's nomination as the Republican Party's candidate for President started in 1940, I received a personal letter from Dewey asking me to join his speakers' bureau. At that time, I was President of the All-American Association, an organization whose purpose it was to unite the dissenting leaders of the two largest American labor organizations, the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) and AF of L (American Federation of Labor), and form a single strong labor bloc for political purposes. As none of the presidential candidates of that time was willing to commit himself to a strong labor platform, the All-American Association did not give its official approval to any one of the candidates but left its officers to make their own choice.

I acceded to Dewey's request and spent the next four months touring and speaking with one of the Dewey units that traveled from New York to the Pacific Coast and back again to Washington. Gradually Dewey emerged as the leading contender for the presidential nomination of the Republican Party. The other leading Republican candidates, who were far less popular, were Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Senator Robert A. Taft, and—a new name in the political arena—Wendell Willkie.

A CLEVER MOVE

Roosevelt's first move was to weaken the Republicans by luring away two of their key men, Frank Knox and Henry Stimson, and appointing them Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of War in his Democratic cabinet. As both of these men were Morgan men, Knox being the editor and publisher of Morgan's *Chicago Daily News* and Stimson an ex-partner of J. P. Morgan & Co., Roosevelt thus made his bid to the all-powerful Morgan group to favor him with its support. While he had presented the Morgan group with two key posts which in the coming war would control the awarding

of huge armament contracts, the Republicans had no men to offer for the same posts in the proposed Republican cabinet who could compare in reliability from the Morgan and Wall Street point of view.

However, in stripping the Republican Party of these two top men, Roosevelt had made a move which later seemed for a while more of a danger than a favor to Wall Street. When the Republican Party was left "headless," those Americans who were against Roosevelt's policy of embroiling the country in a second world war began to look for new leaders. As it was generally known that Dewey was in favor of keeping the country out of war, the public took an increasing interest in him. The possibility appeared that the Republican Party might select an independent candidate who would not fall in line with Wall Street and who might actually defeat Roosevelt.

In order to understand the object of the election conventions, one must remember how the American elections are run (see "The Latest US Elections," January 1943). Before the actual presidential election takes place in November, each party must nominate its own candidate. In view of the fact that, in spite of all efforts, third parties have so far never been able to succeed in the November elections, the main question is whom the Republicans and Democrats select as their candidates. This selection is decided at their party conventions a few months before the actual election.

THE POWERS BEHIND

In spite of all the ballyhoo connected with the presidential elections, it is a matter of comparative indifference from the point of view of America and the rest of the world which of the two parties wins. For in the last analysis both parties are controlled by the same groups and differ only slightly in their principles. Both parties require strong financial backing, and consequently both parties have wooed the most powerful financial group in America—the giant Morgan concern.

For many years, the leaders of both the political parties vied with each other in the private office of J. P. Morgan and promised to give him anything he wanted as long as he helped their own group in the elections, so that they could lay their hands on the spoils of the Government. These political promises enabled Morgan to gain his stranglehold on America's financial and industrial world and to get the cream of the profits produced by the American people. These profits in turn attracted the wealthy class of the United States to invest its money in the Morgan syndicate. Thus the joining of wealth around Morgan brought together America's sixty richest families, which control both the Republican and Democratic Parties and through them the politics of the United States.

This plutocratic group has been ruling the United States in the name of either one or the other of the two political parties for many years, and it has always seen to it that the party conventions produced presidential candidates to its liking, so that, no matter which party won the final elections, the interests of plutocracy would be taken care of. Hence Wall Street is more interested in the results of the conventions than in the final elections in November.

Dewey's gains in popularity prior to the Republican Convention had been observed by Wall Street with some misgivings. In 1940, Wall Street regarded Dewey as a "stray cat"—whatever its attitude toward him may be today—and it did not like the idea of his candidacy. Yet it soon became obvious that he was way ahead of the other candidates in the sympathy of the Republican voters. So something had to be done about it.

Incidentally, while it makes little or no difference to the Morgan group whether one or the other of the two American parties is in power, it does make a great deal of personal difference to the leaders of these parties. Thus in 1940 the question for Roosevelt was whether he could keep the presidency for a third term, while for the Republicans the election

meant a chance to push Roosevelt out and take over the reins and spoils of Government—always, of course, having their obligations to the Morgan group in mind. And as for the masses of the American voters, they still have such illusions about their Government that they take the elections seriously, believing that it really makes a difference which party wins.

CONVENTION TIME

On June 24, 1940, the actual business of selecting an American president commenced when the 22nd Republican National Convention assembled at the Municipal Stadium in Philadelphia. The purpose of this Convention was to choose from among the many Republican aspirants a candidate who would be the Republican Party's nominee in the presidential elections in November.

The whole city was filled with an air of political comedy. Candidate Willkie, up to this point unknown in American politics, was walking down Broad Street attended by a cheering crowd of somebody else's delegates. The other aspirants were likewise touring up and down the streets followed by their own private brass bands. Bands were playing everywhere. 1,900 flags had been placed along Philadelphia's streets by its enterprising mayor. An augmented fleet of taxicabs darted about streets festive with bunting and miniature elephants (symbols of the Republican Party), as they carried the thousand delegates from the shadow of Independence Hall across the Schuylkill River to Convention Hall on the fringe of the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Downtown hotels were beehives of activity. At the Walton Hotel, Thomas E. Dewey, the predicted winner, took up his headquarters. Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio set up his men at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel, and Wendell Willkie used the Adelphia Hotel.

Electricians strung hundreds of miles of cables in Convention Hall and installed an elaborate system of loud-speakers and amplifiers along the walls and on stands set up among the seats of the delegates.

LEWIS SMELLS A RAT

Prominent among the spectators was John Lewis, outstanding American labor leader, neatly dressed in blue with his dark-brown mane a little grayer than at the last convention. When I went over to see him, I was accompanied by 29-year-old Senator Rush Holt of West Virginia, one of Lewis's ardent supporters. After the usual comments on the Convention situation, Lewis called Senator Holt and me to one side. He had just been informed, he said, that Willkie was soliciting delegates by offering them post-election positions and that Willkie had some kind of electrical equipment in the hall which he, Lewis, would like to have destroyed.

Labor's antipathy to Wendell Willkie was due to the latter's close association with the house of Morgan. Willkie was at that time President of the Commonwealth and Southern Corporation at 20 Pine Street, New York, just around the corner from Wall Street. In view of the fact that Commonwealth and Southern had been organized by J. P. Morgan & Co., who still owned the controlling shares, the corporation was, in a sense, a branch office of that Morgan mother-company. In labor's eyes, there was never any question but that Willkie was backed by Morgan both financially and politically.

While two men were dispatched to trace Willkie's electrical equipment and report their findings, Lewis was questioned by newspaper men as to his choice for the Republican nomination. He replied: "I'm for any man who can defeat Roosevelt." As to Roosevelt's military conscription plan, Lewis said: "It's a fantastic suggestion from a mind in full intellectual retreat." This statement was telephoned to the platform speakers. These immediately announced it to the Convention, which sent up cheers to the rafters.

CAREFULLY WORDED PLATFORM

Senator Holt and I then went over to see Alf Landon, who was in charge of the Party's "platform," as the Party's pro-

gram is called at election time. We were interested to see if he had kept his promise to write in a keep-out-of-war plank. While we were reading it, Landon commented that he had included it but, he thought, in such a way as not to offend any possible backers who wanted to aid the Allies. H. L. Mencken, the well-known writer and critic, broke into our conversation by offering his opinion on the Republican platform. "It is so written," he said, "that it will fit both the triumph of democracy and the collapse of democracy, and approve both sending arms to England and sending flowers only." But all agreed that the platform was safe from any one-sided attack by the Democrats.

The Convention's Chairman, Harold Stassen, formally opened the session with a brief speech condemning Knox and Stimson for betraying the Republican Party by accepting Roosevelt's appointments to the offices of Secretary of Navy and War respectively. The Republican Party's Secretary-General Hamilton then contended that they were no longer wanted in the Republican ranks anyway, and that they had sought this method of keeping out of a political grave. When, after several more speeches, the Republican Party platform was read out by Alf Landon, it received a deafening response of cheers and applause lasting about three minutes.

The first ballot of the thousand delegates was then taken by a roll call of states. The results of this were: Dewey 360, Taft 189, Willkie 105, Vandenberg 76, James 74, Martin 44, Gannett 35, MacNider 34, and Hoover 17. Since, to become the Republican Party's official nominee, the winning candidate must have an absolute majority of the Convention's votes, balloting had to continue till one of the candidates obtained the required majority. During the first roll call there was little doubt about the galleries; every Willkie vote was cheered.

THE VOICE OF THE GALLERY

At this point our two investigators returned and reported that they had found a man in the basement of the Convention Hall sitting in a small room equipped with a microphone connected with all the wall amplifiers in the hall. He was sitting there, whispering in a low voice into the microphone: "We want Willkie! We want Willkie! We want Willkie!" This produced a rumble throughout the hall in favor of Willkie. It was now clear to us that it was not the gallery which was for Willkie but one single man sitting in the basement. The loud-speakers had naturally been set up to carry the voices of the platform speakers above the din of the Convention Hall. The electricians setting them up had probably collected a handsome sum of money from the Willkie group for running extra wires from the loud-speakers to the basement microphone.

We sent off a reliable man whom I had brought for all emergencies from New York's "Hell's Kitchen" with instructions to smash the microphone and tear down the wiring in the basement. It was not long before he returned from the basement to report that the "microphone room" was now protected by a squad of Philadelphia policemen and could not be reached. So the "gallery" continued its "We want Willkie!"

When the next ballot was taken, Dewey fell a little while Willkie gained some votes. Results: Dewey 338, Taft 203, Willkie 171. The Chairman then announced that a personal roll call of all the delegates would be taken. It had been rumored that at least one delegate had sold his vote to several candidates. After that, the Convention adjourned.

WE GO TO WORK

When the following morning's first ballot showed that Willkie had reached second place (Dewey 315, Willkie 259, and Taft 212), we decided to use strong methods. Our man was ordered to buy a cheap microphone in the neighborhood and then force his way into the room under the pretext of being a repair electrician.

By the time the afternoon session started, the calls of "We want Willkie!"

had disappeared from the loud-speakers. We learned that our man had not only smashed the microphone but knocked out two of the policemen, and that he was now safely in the local Philadelphia "cooler." Senator Holt and I later went to see Justice of the Peace John L. McNaughton, who demanded $500 bail for his release. This we gave him and sent our man back to New York.

But the loud-speaker propaganda had already done its work. The impression had gained ground that the crowds in the gallery were all for Willkie. Added to this was the activity of Willkie's floor organization, which worked from ear to ear of each of the delegates. It seems that they were given some sort of personal guarantee of post-election jobs if they would swing their votes to Willkie. The results of this became apparent in the next ballot: Willkie 306, Taft 254, Dewey 250.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

At that moment, Alf Landon stood up and announced that he would give his Kansas delegation's eighteen votes to Willkie. The fifth ballot was then taken and ended with this score: Willkie 429, Taft 377, Dewey 57. The Willkie stampede was on.

Governor John Bricker of Ohio frantically rushed for one of the floor microphones to move for a recess—the one maneuver that might have stemmed the tide. He was too late. The Chairman started to speak and therefore had the floor: "There being no majority, the Convention will proceed with the sixth ballot."

The crowd sensed the kill. In the arena, all eyes were on the delegates in the Michigan and Pennsylvania sections, who had held out against Willkie so far. Senator Vandenberg strode to the rostrum to announce dramatically that, as a result of a poll among the Michigan delegation, its 35 votes would go to Willkie. Then Pennsylvania's 72 delegates left the hall for a private conference with the Willkie chiefs.

As they filed back into the arena, it was Virginia's turn to ballot. Vermont's vote had just brought Willkie up to 499, so that the Pennsylvania delegates held the last trump. Senator David Reed surprised everyone by tossing all of Pennsylvania's 72 votes into the flood for Willkie.

The entire convention burst forth into tumultuous applause for Willkie. The battle was over, and Wendell Willkie, the dark horse, had won the Republican Party's nomination for presidency in 1940.

DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS

A few weeks after the close of the Republican Convention, I attended the 28th Democratic National Convention, which was held at the Chicago Stadium on July 15, 1940. This Convention was started amid an atmosphere of mystery: Roosevelt had not up to that time publicly announced whether he would submit his name as a possible candidate. His intention had been to avoid concrete criticism from within his own party against a precedent-breaking third term by a premature announcement of his desires. Nevertheless, his name had been placed with those of Vice-President Jack Garner, Senator Burton Wheeler, and Postmaster General James Farley as possible candidates for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

Harry Hopkins, the President's close friend, had taken up quarters in a suite of rooms at the Blackstone Hotel and had immediately arranged for a private telephone line to be connected directly with the White House. Roosevelt himself had asked Hopkins to arrange for a private wire to the speakers' table at the Convention to enable him to hear everything that was being said there.

William Bankhead, the Convention's Chairman, opened the session by reading out the Party platform. I particularly recall a very interesting paragraph to the effect that "we will not participate in foreign wars, and we will not send our army, naval, or air forces to fight in foreign lands outside of the Americas." This provoked a rousing cheer from the public spectators.

PSYCHOLOGY

Senator Bankhead then dramatically called for the first ballot. A tense hush spread over the whole Convention as the serious business was about to begin, and no one was sure just what to do. At that point, Farley rose and received a tremendous ovation, which seemed to indicate that a large number were in favor of his nomination. Senator Barkley, one of the men of the Roosevelt machine, sensed that something was amiss. He felt sure that it was impossible for Roosevelt not to express any wish concerning Farley in such circumstances. So as to gain time before the balloting began, Barkley demanded a personal roll call of all delegates present in order to check their authority to vote. While this was taking place, he left the hall and telephoned to Hopkins, informing him of the situation. Hopkins told him to hold the wire, while he explained the situation to Roosevelt. It was only now that Roosevelt said: "Tell the Convention I am a candidate!" Hopkins passed the word on to Senator Barkley, who rushed back into the Convention Hall. He ran up to the speakers' rostrum and informed Chairman Bankhead.

By this trick, Roosevelt had shown *himself to be a master of applied psychology.* As Bankhead announced the news of Roosevelt's desire to stand for the Democratic Party's presidential candidacy, the whole delegation, freed from its burden of uncertainty, resounded with the echoing words of "Make it unanimous!" Roosevelt was nominated by acclamation.

It was the shortest session of any convention ever held. The bands played "Happy Days Are Here Again," but few Democrats were happy. Almost all of them were in favor of a third term—because they were in favor of holding their jobs and patronage. But they knew that they were there in Chicago only as so much scenery, like the Hawaiian *leis* and the brass bands, and they did not much like the feeling of being mere robots.

With the Democratic National Convention's selection of Roosevelt as the Party's presidential candidate, all that remained for the public was to decide in November whether they wanted him or the Republican candidate Wendell Willkie as their President. At the November elections, Roosevelt secured 27,241,939 of the public's votes, while Willkie received the considerable number of 22,327,226. Thus Roosevelt became President of the United *States for a third term.*

Dirty Business

Diogenes once came into a bathing establishment that seemed particularly filthy. He looked about for a while and then said:

"Tell me, where do the people bathe who have taken a bath here?"